

CHEER**28-1-5****Policy**

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) may offer Community Housing Employment Enrichment Resource (CHEER) that provides financial assistance to youth who were committed abused, neglected, or uncared for as of their 18th birthday and who demonstrate motivation to pursue a post-secondary employment training and career development program.

Community Housing Employment Enrichment Resources (CHEER)

Funding for CHEER shall be based on available DCF budget appropriations.

CHEER may include training for non-certified vocational or technical programs, apprenticeship programs or job readiness development. CHEER may also provide job placement assistance.

CHEER shall provide several living options coupled with support services to assist the youth with a gradual move towards successful adult living. Housing options may include, but are not limited to:

- individual and shared apartments
- boarding arrangements
- on-site living arrangements offered by an employment program.

While involved in CHEER, a youth shall receive community case management by private providers that demonstrate competencies in job training, job coaching and job placement. Case management shall be provided up to the youth's 21st birthday. If a youth requires extended support the youth's Transitional Support Social Worker (TSS) may seek a waiver by filing a DCF 2098 (see Extended Support Guidance.)

If a youth plans to participate in both Post-Secondary Education (PSE) and CHEER, the youth's PSE plan shall be approved by a DCF PSE Consultant. The plan shall also be approved by the CHEER Coordinator.

Cross Reference: DCF 3-2-1 PG, DCF Post-Secondary Education Practice Guide

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CHEER**28-1-5****CHEER
Eligibility
and
Program
Require-
ments**

To be eligible for admission to CHEER, a youth shall:

- be DCF committed abused, neglected or uncared for at the time of their 18th birthday
- have obtained a high school diploma or Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED)
- if approaching age 18, have signed a DCF-779, "Notice at Age of Majority and Agreement for Service Post Majority (SPM)," prior to the youth's 18th birthday indicating his or her desire to continue receiving services
- have successfully completed a DCF-approved Life Skills Program
- be motivated to pursue employment training or job readiness services that will lead to gainful employment
- participate in activities consistent with job training or job acquisition with the goal number of hours established
- have an approved post-secondary employment training plan approved by the CHEER Coordinator and the Area Office Adolescent Program Supervisor
- be in good standing in accordance with the standards of the employment program
- have a referral packet reviewed and approved by the DCF Central Office CHEER Coordinator
- be enrolled prior to age 21.

Exceptions to the above criteria may be granted due to extraordinary circumstances via a consult with the CHEER Program Lead.

**CHEER
Contract**

A DCF-2252 "CHEER Contract" shall be written by the TSS with the youth and signed twice a year as part of the Administrative Case Review (ACR) process. The CHEER contract shall be reviewed quarterly by the youth, the TSS and the Community Case Manager (if applicable).

The CHEER contract shall include, but not be limited to:

- an agreed-upon place of residence
- roles and responsibilities of the youth, DCF and community case manager
- plan for full-time employment training and employment

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Contract,
continued**

- financial arrangements (e.g., budget, savings)
- statement regarding a proposed timeline to attain self-sufficiency and review dates to determine progress, including anticipated length of community case management
- statement regarding the expectation that the youth successfully complete a DCF approved life skills assessment
- statement regarding actions and adjustments if the youth does not meet expectations
- statement regarding DCF-approved roommates

If a youth will reside in the home of a DCF-approved relative, friend or former foster parent the responsible adult(s) in the home shall sign off on the youth's CHEER contract agreeing to such an arrangement. Roles, rules, and responsibilities of all involved persons shall be identified and agreed to in the youth's CHEER contract and updated on a quarterly basis.

Note: Any funding going directly to the identified adult in the household for rent is considered taxable and reportable income.

Youth who are married or on active duty with any of the armed forces of the United States shall not be eligible for continuing CHEER services.

Cross reference: V.I.T.A.L. Practice Guide, CHEER Description

**CHEER
Funding**

Funding for CHEER housing shall be based on the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) fair market rental rates for a one-bedroom apartment that includes heat. The amount of a youth's stipend shall be based on the current cost of living pursuant to state and federal guidelines.

If a youth receives Social Security benefits or any other entitlements, these monies shall be subtracted from the funding limits provided in this policy and shall be considered as part of the overall budget for the youth.

A CHEER stipend may be used for a youth in out-of-state boarding arrangements. If a youth is attending an approved CHEER program out of state and living arrangements are not provided, the HUD fair market rental rates for that state and area shall be used when calculating the rent portion of the stipend.

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Funding,
continued**

To determine a youth's stipend, the TSS and community case manager, if applicable, shall develop a monthly budget with the youth based on expenditures for rent, food, utilities, telephone, transportation and clothing.

If a youth is participating in a paid internship, fellowship or any learning opportunity that involves a subsidy, this funding shall be subtracted from the funding limits noted in this policy and shall be considered part of the overall budget for the youth.

When calculating the stipend, the post-secondary education annual funding limit shall be taken into consideration. After training costs, materials and other fees related to the approved program are calculated and subtracted from the annual PSE limit, the remaining amount may be used for the stipend.

Once the stipend is determined, a monthly payment shall be sent to the youth for these items. The youth shall save all documentation for these expenditures and produce them on request. The TSS and community case manager shall monitor spending on these items to assess the youth's budget.

**CHEER
Youth's
Financial
Expectations**

Youth shall be encouraged to save and deposit up to 50% of their income from employment during the first nine months of the CHEER contract in an interest-bearing savings account.

Youth shall begin to assume the cost of their rent at month six of the CHEER contract by utilizing earnings from employment. DCF shall assume 100% of the cost from 0-6 months, 80% of the cost from 6-9 months, 60% of the cost from 9-12 months, 30% of the cost from 12-16 months, 15% of the cost from 16-20 months, and 0% of the cost from 20-24 months.

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CHEER**28-1-5****CHEER
Part-Time
Attendance**

A youth may be approved for CHEER on a part-time basis if:

- the youth present with or develop a
 - physical health concern
 - behavioral health concern or
 - substance use issue
- the youth has been identified as a special education student
- the youth has had a 504 Accommodation Plan and continues to need special accommodations
- the TSS has approved and documented the need for an exception.

A youth in CHEER may reside in another program approved by DCF through which housing and living expenses are included. These youth shall be eligible for funding for their employment training programs up to the amount of Central Connecticut State University tuition, books and fees.

**CHEER
Change of
Program**

A youth may elect to change their CHEER program. The youth must apply for a PSE program by the end of the 12th month of the CHEER contract in order to be eligible for additional opportunities unless the area office team supports the request.

All requests for PSE programs shall include a complete PSE packet that has been approved by the area office program supervisor and submitted to the DCF post-secondary educational staff for final review and approval.

A youth who has participated in a PSE program may elect to participate in CHEER instead of a second post-secondary opportunity.